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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Saturday, 17 September 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Item 111 of the provisional agenda

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/60/1)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at the 1st plenary meeting, held on 13 September 2005, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization. I have the pleasure and honour of giving the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: We meet at the end of a historic week for the United Nations. Progress has been made across a broader front than on any other single occasion in the 60-year history of the Organization.

World leaders have met to prohibit incitement to terrorism, pledge money to support democracy and discuss the threat of HIV/AIDS, malaria and bird flu. The United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations agreed to closer relations. The leaders of the European Union three and Iran met to seek a way forward. Important discussions were held on the Middle East, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti.

But by far the most important achievements were at the World Summit itself. We did not achieve everything. After all, we were ambitious and set the bar very high. But by tackling a range of issues together, we clearly achieved a great deal.

The Summit made breakthroughs in adopting strategies to fight poverty and disease, creating new machinery to win the peace in war-torn countries and pledging collective action to prevent genocide. It made real progress on terrorism, human rights, democracy, management of the Secretariat, peacekeeping and humanitarian response. And it opened doors to further action on global public health, global warming and mediation.

Now, we turn to a new task: to implement what has been agreed and to keep working to bridge differences that remain. The Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) imposes responsibility on each of us individually and on all of us collectively. Many items must be completed during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

With so much work to do in one year, I propose that we start with an accountability pact. Let us each pledge to live up to what the Summit Outcome requires of us and hold each other to account for doing so.

I intend to follow through on every action asked of me, and I ask Member States to tell me immediately if they think I am not doing so. I will also keep score on the progress they make in implementing what has been agreed, and I will speak plainly if I believe they are falling behind. I have no doubt that global public opinion will keep a close eye on our progress. Let me remind the Assembly of some of the important items on our checklist and of what each of us must do to make sure that we tick them off on time.

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First, with regard to management reform, the summit document gives the go-ahead for extensive management reforms to make the Secretariat more efficient, more effective and more accountable. I will start, on Monday, to drive that process forward. Here is what I intend to do, as the Assembly has requested.

To update our work practices and improve effectiveness and efficiency, I will make recommendations to assist the Assembly's review of all ongoing mandates agreed in the first 55 years of the Organization. I will also undertake a thorough assessment of our budget and human resources rules, and recommend ways of adapting them so that the Secretariat is administered in the most up-to-date manner. And I will offer the Assembly a detailed proposal for a one-time staff buyout, to ensure that we have the personnel best suited to carry out the priorities the Assembly has set.

To promote accountability, after commissioning a full and independent review of our oversight and management system, I will present a blueprint for an independent oversight audit committee. I will also very soon submit the details of the independent ethics office that I intend to create, which will protect whistle-blowers and ensure more extensive financial disclosure. I will also make proposals to ensure that, in the future, the Secretary-General is fully equipped to discharge his responsibilities as chief administrative officer, and that Member States are able to hold him to account.

I ask the Assembly to live up to its commitments to follow through on those items and to meet its pledge to provide greater funding for internal oversight. Let us stay focused in the year ahead, and make those reforms a reality. That is the way to restore the confidence of people everywhere in the Organization's integrity and ability to deliver.

Second, we must strengthen our human rights machinery. The High Commissioner for Human Rights will move ahead in implementing her plan of action, and the Assembly has pledged to assist her in strengthening her Office and doubling its budget. The Assembly has also agreed to strengthen the human rights treaty bodies. Most important, the Assembly has agreed to create a Human Rights Council. President Eliasson needs the Assembly's full support in conducting negotiations to finalize agreement on important details in the coming months. I believe negotiations should resume on the basis of the detailed language developed in the lead-up to the summit, which enjoyed the support of the overwhelming majority of Member States. I believe that the majority must lead, and that those who have reservations should make an extra effort to show flexibility. Let us have a Human Rights Council that commands respect and achieves results.

Third, we must move forward on terrorism. The summit contains, for the first time, an unqualified condemnation by all Member States of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes. As the Assembly has agreed, it must build on that simple statement to complete a comprehensive convention against terrorism in the year ahead and forge a global counter-terrorism strategy that weakens terrorists and strengthens the international community. We can do it, and we must do it.

Fourth, we must get the Peacebuilding Commission up and running. Almost all the key details have now been agreed. The Assembly's task in the next few months is to finalize and operationalize the Commission; mine is to set up a small support office and a standing fund to support the Commission. Let us each do our part so that the Peacebuilding Commission can begin its work before the end of the year.

Fifth, and particularly important, we must meet our commitments on development. This has been a historic year for development. After this week, any doubt that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) enjoyed universal support has been removed. We have an ambitious commitment to add $50 billion a year to the fight for development within five years. The scale of that achievement seems to have been missed by some. So let us make sure we live up to our promises to the world's poor.

Every developing country is now pledged to formulate, and begin to implement by next year, a national strategy bold enough to achieve the internationally agreed development objectives, including the MDGs, by 2015. For their part, developed countries must deliver on their pledges to boost financing for development and relieve debt. We also have hopeful signs that progress is possible towards the universal, rule-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system envisaged in the summit document. Let us build

on that promise and press ahead with the Doha trade round.

Sixth, we must keep working on Security Council reform. We have tried hard to find a way forward on that vital issue. It has not been easy, and we have not yet succeeded. But world leaders agree that early Council reform is, in their words, "an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*). They have called for a review of progress by the end of this year. Let all parties make a genuine effort to find a solution that can command wide support, not for the sake of any particular group but for the sake of the Organization.

Seventh, we must urgently begin to remedy our distressing failures on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The consensus underlying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is badly frayed. Twice this year — at the NPT Review Conference and now at this summit — months of negotiation have yielded silence. States could not even agree to reaffirm their existing commitments or find a way forward, even at the level of principles. They have been content to point fingers at each other, rather than work for solutions.

Yet we face the growing risks of proliferation and catastrophic terrorism, and the stakes are too high to continue down a dangerous path of diplomatic brinksmanship. Let us instead work together to strengthen all three pillars of the regime: non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses. I encourage Norway, Australia, Chile, Indonesia, Romania, South Africa and the United Kingdom to continue their efforts to find a way forward. All States should support their initiative to address this existential threat.

Sometimes multilateral solutions seem impossibly difficult, but from time to time it pays to step back and see how far we have come.

I first spoke from this rostrum in 1999 on the need for the international community to act in the face of genocide. My remarks caused intense debate among the membership. Yet now, six years later, after many States have worked hard, civil society has become fully engaged and genuine concerns have been addressed, you have come together to acknowledge your solemn responsibility not just to care, but to act. You will be tested on that commitment in the years ahead.

Make no mistake. This is a hard-won revolution in international affairs and a signal of hope for the weakest in our world. And it teaches us a vital lesson: if we persevere, we can find collective answers to our common problems.

So let us work together, confident and determined. If we do that, and if we do what we have promised this week, we will help save millions of lives and give hope to billions of people. That would be a fitting achievement to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations and a platform from which to do even more in the years ahead.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his address.

Statement by the President

The President: The 2005 world summit is now concluded. We have thoroughly reviewed progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the reform process facing the United Nations. Our political leaders, who have come in such great numbers to New York, have instilled new energy into our efforts to meet those common development goals and to prepare the United Nations for the weighty demands placed on multilateral cooperation in the twenty-first century.

Over the past three days, our leaders brought into the General Assembly their peoples' expectations of the United Nations but also their pain and anger resulting from unmet needs and unfulfilled aspirations. In stark terms, they brought the realities of the problems of the world into this historic Hall. They told us unequivocally that progress towards the goals we agreed at the Millennium Summit, and towards the commitments we made at Monterrey, has been insufficient. The cost is being counted in the innumerable lives lost or made intolerable as a result of preventable poverty and in the failure to unleash the massive potential of so many of our men, women and children around the world.

But the summit also registered strong agreement on the way forward — for example, on the need for developing countries to be fully in the lead through bold national strategies for achieving the MDGs by 2015. We heard a strong welcome for recent progress on aid and debt, although many members expect further action on debt, more quickly and in more countries. And, with regard to trade, I trust that the

world will have heard the overwhelming message of so many of our leaders that failure to make real and substantial progress in Hong Kong must not be an option. On this, and on all the actions needed to achieve the MDGs, the Organization must continue to scrutinize progress and demand greater effort wherever it is needed.

What else did we hear from our leaders? Most important, we heard an unfailing commitment to international cooperation and to the United Nations and the purposes and principles enshrined in its Charter. It was particularly gratifying to note the central role that our leaders expect a revitalized and relevant General Assembly to play.

The basis for our reform agenda is the 2005 World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1), the result of much thought, much labour and much painstaking scrutiny; I think everyone would agree on that. I want to join those speakers who have paid tribute to the Secretary-General and to my predecessor, Jean Ping, for their tireless efforts. I also want to pay tribute to all members; the final document is very much their achievement.

I believe the outcome document is a strong and substantial foundation for our work on development, security and human rights, as well as the structure of the United Nations. Many see it as a solid basis for the most ambitious reform agenda in the history of the United Nations. Others argue that it will make little difference in the outside world. Still others are frustrated that issues important to them are missing or insufficiently clear, whether they relate to development, human rights, disarmament and non-proliferation, or Security Council reform.

Who is right? The answer, I believe, is up to us. The document should, as one speaker put it, be a beachhead of common ground from which we launch ourselves forward with urgency and common purpose. The world will be watching to see if we do so during this important sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

Follow-up and implementation of the summit outcome has been agreed as the major theme of this general debate, starting today. I very much hope that Member States will use this opportunity to bring out their observations and ideas about both the substance of our issues — the sombre realities of today's world — and the process and work ahead.

Members' views on the areas in which we are expected to finish the work outlined in the summit outcome document will be of particular interest: these are, primarily, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council, terrorism and Security Council and management reform. As I indicated at the opening of the sixtieth session, once we have absorbed all the contributions to the general debate, I plan to present an outline of work related to summit follow-up for the year ahead. At that point, I also intend to share with members some thoughts on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Let us now face those tasks energized by the realities brought into our deliberations by our leaders, never forgetting that we are here to serve the peoples of the world — a world where there is so much suffering, insecurity and oppression. I also hope that our leaders will continue to place the United Nations high on their agendas and that they will continue, in various formats and forums, to press for the fulfilment of the MDGs and the implementation of the summit outcome.

In our work here at the United Nations, let us be as practical and concrete as possible and organize ourselves so that we can deliver results. That will require a spirit of compromise, civility and discipline. And I want us to conduct our work with transparency, efficiency and fairness. I look forward to our cooperation and count on the support of members in this, our common and vital endeavour.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

General debate

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker in the debate, I should like to remind members that the list of speakers has been formed on the basis that statements will have a time limit of 15 minutes. I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed, so that interpretation can be provided properly.

I should also like to draw the attention of representatives to the decision taken by the Assembly at previous sessions that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the Hall after a statement has been made is strongly discouraged. In this connection, I should like to invite speakers in the general debate, after having delivered their statements, to exit the

General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the sixtieth session?

It was so decided.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, Ambassador Jan Eliasson of Sweden, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I should also like to express fraternal greetings to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose wisdom and commitment to multilateralism have made an immense contribution to progress here at the United Nations. Minister Jean Ping of Gabon deserves special recognition for the competent and dedicated manner in which he presided over the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

This is a rare and historic opportunity to promote change; let us not waste it. Peace, development, democracy and respect for human rights are objectives that unite us. Reform must be our motto.

The final document adopted yesterday at the summit (resolution 60/1) has unquestionably fallen short of our expectations. However, it provides us with guidelines that will enable us to carry out our work.

The General Assembly must be strengthened. More than ever, we need a forum with universal representation, in which the crucial issues of today's world can be democratically debated. The General Assembly must provide leadership and political guidance to the Organization as a whole. In supporting the authority of the General Assembly by enabling it to act more speedily and be more productive, we are supporting the very essence of the United Nations.

The Economic and Social Council must again become a dynamic and influential organ. It must help us to come together on issues related to trade, finance and development in an environment free from prejudice and dogma. The Economic and Social Council should be a privileged, deliberative forum in our quest for reconciliation between the objectives of sustainable economic growth and the reduction of the inequalities caused by asymmetric globalization. President Lula suggested this year, at the summit of the Group of Eight (G-8) at Gleneagles, that we could start raising the profile of the Economic and Social Council by organizing a high-level segment, with the participation of the Finance Minister of the country holding the G-8 presidency. The Economic and Social Council must also help to promote peace and stability in partnership with the Security Council, as provided for in Article 65 of the Charter.

The establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission will bridge an important institutional gap. It will be a link between security and development. Currently, there is no such link.

The structures and mechanisms of the Organization in the human rights field must be improved and reinforced. We support the creation of a Human Rights Council, based on the principles of universality, dialogue and non-selectivity. The elaboration of an annual global report on human rights by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, covering all countries and situations, will help to increase the credibility of the United Nations human rights system.

The Secretary-General has called for better coordination in our work to protect victims of grave and systematic violations of human rights. International cooperation in the field of human rights and humanitarian assistance must be guided by the principle of collective responsibility. We have maintained on several occasions — in our region and elsewhere — that the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of States must be associated with the idea of "non-indifference".

We have been called upon to deal with new concepts, such as human security and the responsibility to protect. We agree that they merit a proper place in our system. But it is an illusion to believe that we can combat the dysfunctional politics at the root of grave human rights violations by military means alone, or even by economic sanctions, without fully utilizing diplomacy and persuasion.

Human security is mainly the result of just and equitable societies that promote and protect human rights, strengthen democracy and respect the rule of law, while creating opportunities for economic development and social justice. The United Nations

was not created to disseminate the notion that order should be imposed by force. That extreme expedient can be considered only when all other efforts have been exhausted and peaceful solutions have proved not to be viable. A judgement as to the existence of such exceptional circumstances must always be a multilateral one.

The Charter foresees two situations in which the use of force is permissible: to restore or maintain international peace and security, and in the case of the right to self-defence. Mixing those two concepts would blur the meaning of the very tenets of this Organization.

Security Council reform is the centrepiece of the reform process in which we are engaged. The vast majority of Member States recognize the need to make the Security Council more representative and democratic.

At this historic juncture, no Security Council reform effort will be meaningful unless it contemplates an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent seats, with developing countries from Africa, Latin America and Asia included in both categories. We cannot accept the perpetuation of imbalances that run contrary to the very spirit of multilateralism.

Above all, a more efficient Council must be capable of ensuring that its decisions are implemented. It is not reasonable to expect the Council to continue to expand its agenda and responsibilities without addressing its democracy deficit.

Two years ago, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva declared before the Assembly that every nation that is committed to democracy at the domestic level must strive for more transparent, legitimate and representative decision-making processes in its external relations. In the same spirit, Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out the contradictions to be overcome, stating:

> "We are the ones who go around the world lecturing everybody about democracy. I think it is about time we apply it to ourselves, and then show that there is effective representation".

We are still far from accomplishing the goals of the Millennium Declaration. This week's summit has stressed the importance of a renewed commitment to development assistance and contributed to promoting universal acceptance of the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product devoted to official development assistance. At the same time, we must continue to work on innovative and additional sources of financing. I note with satisfaction that since the Summit of World Leaders for Action against Hunger and Poverty, convened last year by President Lula, we have achieved significant progress. A growing number of Governments and non-governmental organizations have joined in the effort to eradicate hunger and poverty. This is the only war in which we are engaged. This is the only war we can all win.

This year we witnessed yet again brutal acts of terrorism. Innocent civilians, women and children are today victims of groups who stand as adversaries to the values we share. As a country whose identity cannot be dissociated from the notions of tolerance and diversity, Brazil rejects in the strongest terms those abhorrent acts, which go against the very notion of humanity. We will continue to lend our support to increased international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and in the struggle to eliminate its deep-rooted causes.

Such efforts must be undertaken with due respect for international law and human rights. The fight against terrorism cannot be viewed in terms of police repression alone. Nor can such repression result in absurd and indiscriminate killing like terrorism itself. Despite the fact that there is no automatic linkage between poverty and terrorism, communities can be exposed to extreme attitudes by fanatical groups as a result of grave social and economic problems, especially when associated with the absence of civil and political liberties. I wish to express Brazil's readiness to work intensively with a view to the prompt conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism.

We recognize the risks of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, we cannot disregard the importance of reducing and dismantling existing arsenals of all such weapons. We regret that the seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons did not produce tangible results. Together with non-proliferation efforts, we must continue to work tirelessly towards nuclear disarmament.

In addition to the challenges I have just referred to, we are faced with two crises of global scope: the

pandemic explosion of HIV/AIDS and the serious threats posed by climate change. Brazil will continue to promote the implementation of existing multilateral instruments to fight those scourges.

Brazil is committed to reinforcing the strategic alliance with its main partner in our region — Argentina — and to the promotion of a prosperous, integrated and politically stable South America, building upon our experience in the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR). We will tirelessly strive for MERCOSUR's advancement in the economic and political fields. The South American Community of Nations, which was founded last year in Cuzco, Peru, can be seen as a driving force for integration in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole.

Our efforts in establishing partnerships with other developing countries go beyond our immediate region. The India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) has brought together three large democracies from Africa, Asia and Latin America that are keen on deepening the economic, political and cultural ties between them and between their regions. Together with other partners, we have joined in setting up the Group of Twenty (G-20), which places developing countries at the centre of agricultural trade negotiations of the World Trade Organization's Doha round. Thanks to the role played by the G-20, it has been possible to combine trade liberalization with social justice in the context of the multilateral trading system.

Strengthening our ties with Africa has been a long-standing aspiration of Brazil's. No previous Government has pursued that objective with the resolve demonstrated by President Lula. Trade and cooperation between Brazil and Africa have grown significantly. Political dialogue has intensified. We have been contributing to the consolidation of peace and democracy in countries such as Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe. We have helped to fight hunger, develop agriculture and combat the scourge of HIV/AIDS in various brother countries of Africa.

The same sense of solidarity inspires us to participate in United Nations peace efforts in Haiti. The Brazilian and Latin American presence in Haiti is unprecedented, in terms of both troops and political commitment. We are motivated by three main objectives: establishing a safe environment, promoting dialogue among the various political actors with a view to a genuine democratic transition and securing effective international support for institutional, social and economic reconstruction. Haiti is likely to be the first test case for the Peacebuilding Commission.

Brazil and the Arab world are renewing their ties of friendship, inspired by strong historical and cultural affinities. Apart from bilateral initiatives, Brazil has been strengthening its relations with regional groupings such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League. In May 2005, an unprecedented summit of South American and Arab States took place in Brasilia. That pioneering initiative brought together two regions of the developing world in a concrete demonstration of harmony of civilizations.

On several trips to the Middle East, I had the opportunity to talk to variety of people, including leaders from Israel and Palestine. They are aware of Brazil's willingness to support the work of the Quartet as a partner for peace. The practice of tolerance and respect for others, as well as the harmonious co-existence of different communities in our country, constitute our comparative advantage. I believe that conviction is shared by eminent persons and political leaders from both Israel and Palestine.

At the beginning of this new chapter in the life of the United Nations, Brazil remains committed to the ideals that led to the creation of the only Organization of universal scope, the only body that can guarantee a future of peace and prosperity — not for the few, but for all.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): On behalf of President Bush and all of the American people, welcome to New York City.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, my fellow citizens have experienced the compassion of the United Nations. I want to thank Secretary-General Annan for mobilizing the support of this institution. I also want to thank the representatives of the 126 countries that have offered assistance in our relief efforts. The United States will never forget their generosity in our time of need.

In moments of tumultuous historical change, leaders must become architects of a better world. We must survey the new international landscape, lay firm foundations of moral principle and build institutions

that reflect our unique moment in history. It is those institutions that enable citizens of conviction to lead us ever closer to the ideals of justice that stir every soul: the universal desire for security, prosperity, liberty and dignity.

Sixty years ago was just such a time of transformation. After one of the greatest cataclysms in world history, the United States joined with visionary builders from over 50 countries to create the United Nations. We placed the enduring principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the foundation of the United Nations Charter. We built an institution that has helped to support a peaceful world order for six decades. Today, however, with the end of the cold war and the rise of globalization and the emergence of new threats, the very terrain of international politics has shifted beneath our feet. In this new world we must again embrace the challenge of building for the future.

The time to reform the United Nations is now. We must seize this opportunity together. Chapter I, Article 1, of the Charter of the United Nations proclaims the four purposes of the United Nations, great aspirations that have stood the test of time. But consider what different forms they take today, in 2005, as opposed to 1945, when they were first declared.

The first purpose of the United Nations is to help maintain international peace and security. In 1945 the most serious threats to peace and security emerged between States, and were largely defined by their borders. Today, however, the greatest threats we face emerge within States, and melt through their borders: transnational threats like terrorism and the proliferation of weapons, pandemic disease and trafficking in human beings.

The second purpose of this institution, as written in the United Nations Charter, is to develop friendly relations among nations, based on equal rights and the self-determination of all peoples. In 1945, a life of liberty and dignity was more an aspiration than a reality for a majority of the world's people. Today, however, more nations than ever have enshrined the principles of democracy and human rights — a true moral triumph that will be complete only when all individuals are secure in their basic freedoms.

The third purpose of the United Nations is to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems. In 1945, the fear was that strong, aggressive States, eager and able to expand their frontiers with force, would be the primary cause of international problems. Today, however, it is clear that weak and poorly governed States, unwilling or incapable of ruling their countries with justice, are the principal source of global crises, from civil war and genocide to extreme poverty and humanitarian disaster.

The final purpose of the United Nations, as the Charter states, is to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends. In 1945, the world's leaders joined together to build an institutional partnership that could address the shared challenges of their time. Today, faced with the realities of a new world, we must transform the United Nations to meet the shared challenges of our time.

The Members of this body must work together to strengthen security in a world threatened by stateless extremists. Today, I call on the nations of the world to ratify the comprehensive convention on terrorism. No cause, no movement and no grievance can justify the intentional killing of innocent civilians and non-combatants. That is unacceptable by any moral standard. It is time for every Member of the United Nations to outlaw acts of international terrorism.

We must also work together to promote prosperity and development in a world of great potential. The United States is committed to the Millennium Development Goals. And at the Monterrey Conference three years ago all nations agreed that development must be a two-way street. Donor countries have a responsibility to increase their assistance to developing nations. And developing nations have a responsibility to govern justly, advance economic liberty and invest in their people. The Monterrey Consensus is working.

Now is not the time to revert to old, failed thinking about development. Countries representing three quarters of the developing world's population are on a pace to meet the targets of the Millennium Declaration by 2015.

And, as President Bush said on Wednesday, the United States is prepared to take new action to accelerate this progress: we will eliminate all tariffs and subsidies that distort free trade — as other nations do the same.

Members of the United Nations must work together as well to support democracy in a world of expanding liberty. To advance this common purpose, in

2004 President Bush proposed the creation of a democracy fund. With the broad support of this body, we have made it a reality. The Fund is now receiving donations in cash and in kind from countries large and small that wish to help other nations lay the foundations of democracy. Showing its leadership as the world's largest democracy, India made the generous opening pledge of $10 million.

Now, to be sure, when speaking about democracy, the United States has every reason for humility. After all, it was only in my lifetime that America guaranteed the right to vote for all its citizens. Obviously, the path to democracy is long and imperfect and different for every nation. But the principles of democracy are universal, as is the desire for them. And the United Nations must support every country that embraces the challenge of self-government. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and throughout the world, peoples who want to build democracy deserve our help.

The many goals we share are great indeed. And the United Nations has a major role to play in their achievement. But for this institution to become an engine of change in the twenty-first century, it must now change itself. The United Nations must launch a lasting revolution of reform.

The United Nations summit declaration (resolution 60/1), which every head of State endorsed this week, expresses a global consensus on the fact that reform is imperative. I want to thank former General Assembly President Ping for his tireless hard work.

Our challenge now, under President Eliasson's leadership, is to enact the vital reforms that will make the United Nations more accountable to its Members, more suited to new challenges and more faithful to its founding purposes.

The United States welcomes the commitment of all leaders to establish a new Peacebuilding Commission. Now, we must embrace the difficult task of implementing that vision. A Peacebuilding Commission should plan for post-conflict missions before crises erupt. And it must help to coordinate reconstruction efforts after the fighting stops. In a world threatened by civil strife, the United Nations needs to be better prepared to help countries rebuild in the aftermath of conflict.

We are also pleased that the world's leaders have recognized the importance of establishing a new Human Rights Council. But it will take a lot of hard work in the coming months to realize that goal. The Human Rights Council must have fewer members, less politics and more credibility. And it should never, never, empower brutal dictatorships to sit in judgement of responsible democracies. The Human Rights Council must have the moral authority to condemn all violators of human rights, even those that sit among us in this Hall.

Finally, we welcome the promise of the world's leaders to make the United Nations a more effective and a more principled institution. As President Bush said on Wednesday (see A/60/PV.2), the United Nations must stand for integrity and live by the high standards it sets for others. For the United Nations to champion democracy more legitimately, we must increase the transparency and the accountability of this institution. For the United Nations to promote prosperity more credibly, tougher ethics rules and greater internal oversight are needed to ensure the highest professional standards. And to make the United Nations relevant to the challenges of today, the purpose and the performance of all United Nations programmes must be reviewed thoroughly, consistently and comprehensively.

Our fellow citizens deserve a United Nations that commands their respect and is worthy of their hard-earned tax dollars. In a democracy, leaders must be able to justify that their people's money is indeed being well spent.

Real progress on those fundamental reforms will prove that the United Nations can address greater issues of change, in particular the reform of the Security Council. We want that important body to reflect the world as it is in 2005, not as it was in 1945. The United States is open to expanding the Security Council. We have long supported a permanent seat for Japan. And we believe that developing countries deserve greater representation on that body. All this would make for a more effective Security Council.

And the Security Council must be effective. It must be able to deal with great challenges such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation, especially when it faces real threats and when countries such as Iran threaten the effectiveness of the global non-proliferation regime. When diplomacy has been

exhausted, the Security Council must become involved. Questions about Iran's nuclear activities remain unanswered, despite repeated efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency. And after agreeing to negotiate with Europe, Iran unilaterally walked away from the talks and restarted its nuclear programmes. Iran should return to the negotiations with the European Union three and abandon forever its plans for a nuclear-weapons capability.

The experience of recent years has reinforced the universal truth that international institutions are only as strong and effective and relevant as their members choose to make them. The United Nations is no different.

The United States believes in a United Nations that is strong and effective. And we have ambitious hopes for its future.

So in this year, as the United Nations marks its sixtieth anniversary, let us recommit ourselves to principled action. Let us embrace the same spirit of creation that moved the builders and leaders of 1945. And let us reform this great institution to meet the challenges of a new era.

Address by Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obasanjo: On behalf of the Government and the people of Nigeria, and in my capacity as the current Chairman of the African Union (AU), I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, and your country, Sweden, on your election as President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I should also commend you for the leadership you provided at the High-level Plenary Meeting over the past three days. The theme you have chosen for this year's general debate — "For a stronger and more effective United Nations: the follow-up and implementation of the High-level Plenary Meeting in September 2005" — is indeed most appropriate and timely, as it encapsulates our common desire for a renewed and invigorated Organization. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation. I would also like to express appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of the Republic of Gabon, for his leadership and dedication.

I commend the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tenacity and leadership qualities which sustain the role of the United Nations and underlie the current reform process of the United Nations system.

You, Sir, have assumed the presidency of the sixtieth session at a time when the United Nations is witnessing epoch-making historic events. The session has in the last three days taken the assessment and review of the five-year implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Besides pursuing the reform process, launched by the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled "A more secure world: our shared responsibility" (A/59/565), and the Secretary-General's own report entitled "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), the session will also mark the tenth year of implementation of the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Beijing and Copenhagen, respectively.

I have no doubt, Sir, that, with your vast experience in diplomacy and statecraft, you will pilot the session to a successful conclusion.

The United Nations continues to play a pivotal role in the lives of all people with its vast network of activities. In this regard, Nigeria is firmly anchored in its belief, commitment to and support for the strengthening of the United Nations and the protection of its ideals, in particular, the maintenance of international peace and security, prevention and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and promotion of international cooperation in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. There remains so much to do in these areas that only a rejuvenated United Nations can optimally respond to the challenges.

Last year, the situation in the Sudan, including the Darfur region, was a cause of serious concern to Africa and indeed to the international community. However, with the combined efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), we have managed to usher in an era of hope in that country. A Comprehensive Peace Agreement has been signed and implemented on the long-drawn north-south conflict, and the fifth round of inter-Sudanese peace talks on Darfur resumed in Abuja in June 2005 and is currently in progress. I take this opportunity to once again appeal to the parties to shed their hard-line approach to negotiation and adopt a policy of give-and-take in the interest of posterity.

The international community has demonstrated tremendous goodwill in facilitating the peace process in Darfur, and this must be sustained by the parties. Similarly, it is equally important to maintain and sustain the current level of peace between northern and southern Sudan. In this connection, I salute the courage of the late Mr. John Garang in leading the southern Sudanese people into reaching an accord with the Government of the Sudan. We regret the death of Mr. John Garang and extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family and to the Government and people of the Sudan.

The situation in Somalia continues to give hope to the ability of the contending parties to resolve their differences in the higher interest of their beloved country. The African Union will continue to play an active role in this regard, together with the IGAD and countries in the region to help Somalis realize their dream of a united and peaceful country.

In the West African subregion, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have continued to remain fully engaged with efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. In this connection, we acknowledge the valuable support of the United Nations to the peace process. We appreciate the efforts deployed by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to mediate in Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the AU. In view of President Mbeki's report of 30 August 2005 and the recent declaration that the elections scheduled for October may not take place, it would be necessary for ECOWAS, and then the AU, to revisit the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. We will do so in full consultation with the Secretary-General and the Security Council of the United Nations.

We commend the evolving return to democracy, reconciliation, security and development in Togo, and we appreciate the efforts of the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and other development partners in this regard. The elections in Guinea-Bissau have come and gone. The reconciliation process that will precede the inauguration of the newly elected President has begun. Both Togo and Guinea-Bissau will need substantial support to build their economies, without which their situations could deteriorate. We call on the United Nations and its institutions, along with the European Union and other development partners, to help.

The AU stands resolutely by its policy of not accepting to include among its members any Government that emanates from outside a Constitution and democratic processes. That is the situation now with regard to Mauritania. We are of course maintaining a constructive dialogue and recommending an expeditious return to democracy, including national reconciliation and the necessary reforms and legislation to move the country forward.

We welcome the elections in Burundi and the Government resulting from that election, which is based on the newly agreed Constitution. We appreciate the role played by all the friends of Burundi who helped to make that happen. Like Togo and Guinea-Bissau, Burundi will need special assistance to be able to consolidate its reconciliation and democracy.

We applaud the Secretary-General's proposal contained in his recent report on the situation in Sierra Leone. In particular, we welcome his intention to keep the security, political, humanitarian and human rights situation under close review. The AU is also pleased about the six-month extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and recognition of the need for a strong United Nations presence in the country after the withdrawal of UNAMSIL. We believe the presence of the United Nations system will foster confidence and guarantee stability during the critical months following its withdrawal. We call upon the international community to continue to extend assistance to the Government of Sierra Leone in its efforts to develop a credible, effective and sustainable police force, armed forces and

judiciary, as well as rebuild damaged infrastructure necessary to revamp economic and social activities.

The peace process in Liberia is in its most critical phase, and calls for the cooperation of all parties in the country. The AU is closely monitoring developments there. We are optimistic that the elections scheduled for next month will lead to a successful transition. In that connection, the use of propaganda to direct attention to issues unrelated to the conduct of the forthcoming presidential elections should be avoided and resisted.

It is pertinent for me to repeat here what I said before on the issue of Charles Taylor, who was encouraged to leave Liberia in order to avoid a bloodbath. He was encouraged by the leaders of Africa at the level of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the AU to voluntarily give up power and leave his country, in the interests of Liberia, West Africa and Africa, and of world peace and security. He was escorted to Nigeria by President Kuffor, who was the Chairman of ECOWAS at the time, and Presidents Mbeki and Chissano, who were, respectively, the outgoing and incoming Chairmen of the AU. We believe that the cause of peace in Liberia will be served if Charles Taylor stays away, or is kept away, from Liberia during the transition or early stages of nation-rebuilding in that country following the elections.

With regard to the Great Lakes region, we have taken note of the realistic decision of the two houses of Parliament in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to extend, for a period of six months, the transition period that expired on 30 June 2005, in accordance with the provisions of the Global and All Inclusive Agreement, signed in Pretoria in December 2002, and in line with article 196 of the transitional Constitution. The AU is determined to continue to work with the United Nations to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the conflict. In that connection, we reiterate the AU's call to all parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to respect that decision. We hope that this will ensure that the elections provided for by the Agreement take place satisfactorily. With the cooperation of all parties concerned and the active support of the international community, we are hopeful for an orderly return to normality and the restoration of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Nigeria's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation has never been in doubt. We have always supported the view that it should involve all States. Disarmament conventions merit the support of all States, small or large, nuclear or non-nuclear. My delegation regrets the failure of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We should not allow the relative stability in our world to lure us into the belief that the need for total disarmament no longer exists. Nor can we separate disarmament from non-proliferation. Through that we can achieve the goal of the Charter of the United Nations of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and destruction.

The availability and wide circulation of small arms and light weapons poses the greatest danger to peace and security, especially in our region. Those weapons have helped to prolong conflicts and to undermine stability, social peace and security. They have also wreaked devastation on the economies of affected States. Nigeria therefore welcomes the agreement of June 2005 on an international instrument that would enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. However, that is only a stop-gap measure. What we need is a legally binding international instrument that will regulate, control and monitor the illicit trade in small arms, including their transfer to non-State actors. By pronouncing ourselves clearly and positively in that regard, Member States would send a message of their resolve not to encourage or condone the diversion of those weapons to illicit networks.

Terrorism remains a great threat to peace and security at the local, national and international levels. It is inimical to the rule of law, human rights, democracy and freedom. It impedes sustainable development through the destabilization of States, particularly emerging democracies and nations in transition. Nigeria reaffirms its conviction that terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstance, and should therefore be combated in all its forms and manifestations. To that end, my country welcomes the adoption, on 13 April 2005, of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and commits itself to work with others to mobilize the political will necessary to ensure the early entry into force of a comprehensive convention on terrorism. We also welcome the Security Council

resolution against the incitement of terrorism and terrorist acts.

As we embark upon a review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the challenges of hunger, poverty and disease continue to override our conscience as well as the conscience of the international community. It was our concern regarding those challenges that compelled African leaders to commit themselves to the ideals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), whose principal objective was to encourage good governance, democracy, the rule of law, security, stability and macro-economic reforms, among other things. Four years on, NEPAD has made some modest progress that reflects our determination to make Africa work for Africans in an interdependent world and towards the achievement of sustainable development.

However, notwithstanding our efforts, poverty remains endemic in Africa. The dangerous correlation between grinding poverty and alienation from government as a veritable source of political instability on the continent leaves much to be desired. We are, however, grateful for the renewed commitment of our development partners to redeem their ODA pledges, increase foreign direct investment, remodel trading architecture and provide better and effective technical and structural support to our efforts. We have also begun to emphasize well-managed and development-focused tourism as a veritable source of wealth and job creation and an effective contributor to several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We remain committed to providing the necessary conducive environment that will encourage investment and generate wealth and liberate our peoples from poverty. Our agricultural policies and practices are tailored to expansion capable of feeding our people, exporting some of the produce and providing raw materials for our industries.

The pivotal role of trade as a veritable engine for economic growth cannot be overstated. Access to markets of developed countries, withdrawal of agricultural subsidies as well as elimination of distorting tariffs are measures that should be addressed decisively by our industrialized development partners to enhance the ability of developing countries to benefit from trade. The successful completion of the Doha multilateral trade negotiations would be a litmus test of our resolve.

I wish to recognize the statesmanship displayed by members of the Paris Club, which recently granted African countries, among others, debt cancellation and debt relief. We urge the international community to adopt an effective, comprehensive, durable and development-oriented solution to the debt problem of developing countries, which has become for them a cog in the wheel of development, growth and progress.

Since 1986, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has rapidly grown into a monster all over the world. In tackling the scourge, many African countries, including Nigeria, have adopted the multisectoral response strategy recommended by the United Nations.

Nigeria has followed with great interest and participated actively in the various proposals on the reform of our Organization, the United Nations. We strongly support the proposal for the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission, since this will go a long way in filling a yawning gap in the consolidation of sustainable peace and security in post-conflict countries, particularly in Africa.

We also support the proposed Human Rights Council. However, we do not believe that the mere exchange of the Commission on Human Rights for the proposed Council would address perceived deficiencies in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, unless the proposed Council adopts a new culture of treating all cases of violation with a standard yardstick capable of attracting wide support and generating confidence.

As far as the proposal for the expansion of the Security Council is concerned, Nigeria has consistently supported, and as a member of the African Union Follow-up Mechanism remains faithful to, the implementation of the Ezulwini Consensus. We have done so without any second thought or national colourations with the sole aim of achieving the best for Africa in the obligatory negotiations with other regions and Members of the United Nations, whose support Africa must necessarily attract to achieve its fundamental requirement of increasing the number and quality of its membership on the Security Council.

Finally, as Chairman of the African Union for the past year, I have had the privilege of working closely with brother African heads of State or Government in transforming the African Union into a truly potent and effective organization for the development of African peoples. Through our collective efforts, we have

brought hope and confidence to Africa. We do not, under any circumstances, intend to waver in this renewed commitment of repositioning Africa for peace, security, stability, growth, sustainable development and enduring democracy. I am optimistic that with the invaluable cooperation of the United Nations, our development partners and the international community with respect to the MDGs and other NEPAD initiatives, the African Union will successfully pursue the noble objectives enshrined in its Constitutive Act.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Torrijos (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, Sir, to express the congratulations of the Government of Panama on your election to preside over this historic session of the General Assembly.

I would like to congratulate warmly the Secretary-General for the dedicated manner in which he has undertaken the difficult task of reforming the United Nations so as to ensure that it will be able to address the challenges of the twenty-first century.

I wish to express my special thanks in particular to the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Mr. Jean Ping, for his efforts in leading the consultations and reflections in order to attain agreement and, in particular, for placing his trust in the delegation of Panama in order to facilitate this process.

The United Nations was conceived on a fundamental premise, that of the legal equality of States, which at the time was more of an aspiration than a reality. However, much progress has been made on the path towards building a world where the power of reason, justice and dialogue settle disputes between nations and not military or economic power.

My country can confirm that the United Nations and the international community have created effective instruments and institutions to ensure that equality prevails over the deep divide between the industrialized countries and the developing countries.

Panama has gained full control of its territory and recovered the Canal thanks to its visionary leaders, but also to a large extent due to the implementation of the principles of international law that the United Nations has staunchly defended and through the support of the international community.

Panama can never remain indifferent to the destiny of the Organization. As one of the signatories of the Charter and beneficiary of its institutions, Panama understands the need to adapt the Organization to the reality of our time. The formulas used for bringing this adaptation about must focus on increased participation of States in the Organization's decisions and must aim at the full legal equality of all States, an aspiration that has yet to become a reality, but which, nevertheless, remains the mainstay of the United Nations.

We cannot afford to delay in bringing about a radical change in the rules that currently govern economic relations among States, because, while in the United Nations we are slowly progressing towards equality and agreement, the world is rushing towards an abyss of inequality and disagreement.

Despite the efforts undertaken by a number of the least developed countries to adapt their institutions to models that were supposed to help reduce inequalities, practice has shown that there is no one-size-fits-all solution that can be applied across the board to all countries. Indeed, the application of rigid solutions has contributed rather to a further widening of the gap between countries.

Amid such uncertainty concerning our public development policies, unforeseeable events — natural disasters, epidemics and, currently, the rising price of oil, an indispensable driver of production and

growth — have completely altered the balance of foreign and domestic affairs. Moreover, it is unclear whether the negative impact those events have had on our economies will vanish automatically once the phenomena that have created them disappear. Indeed, it appears that we are caught in a vicious and hopeless circle: the differences that have led us to accept urgent changes have, in turn, created more difference and greater resentment in the least developed countries, with more failed States and therefore greater insecurity in the global village.

The price of oil for non-producing countries has further deepened that divide, as it takes away from the resources necessary for their development. To give an example, over the past three years the cost of net imports of oil for Panama has shown a 250 per cent increase. That is the situation for the majority of the countries in our region, as well as for those in other continents, with very few exceptions. Countries like ours that are net importers of oil have to produce more in order to export more and thereby to be able to import the same number of barrels of oil.

Rising oil prices are due to the sharp increase in demand by the major consumers, which have not adopted effective policies to reduce their dependency on hydrocarbons.

Even more serious is the fact that fuel prices have risen so dramatically and have wreaked such havoc in a number of countries they threaten to create political instability and provoke economic crises.

It is only with the technical and financial cooperation of developed countries — in particular in the field of energy — that we can achieve the transfer of technologies that can help us to produce cleaner and cheaper energy. As a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, Panama has submitted projects with clearly identified requests for financing that deserve to be supported by multilateral funding institutions and by those countries that cause the greatest pollution.

Energy dependency is compounded by the difficulties that countries face in importing technology and holding on to their human resources, in particular the most qualified among them. Workers that have migrated to richer countries send home financial remittances that can temporarily supplement the income generated by our national economies but that, in the long term, prevent us from exploiting our most important asset — our most highly qualified human resources. Those workers contribute to the innovative growth that our nations require. The result is the accumulation of innovative capital and productive labour in the most developed countries, with a corresponding impoverishment of countries most in need of those resources, generating yet greater divergence and more inequalities. In other words, the exodus of human capital, while providing a source of currency in the short term hampers our countries' long-term development.

Our countries must be able to compete even in the absence of a level playing field. We must as a priority put an end to tariff barriers to trade, which prevent developing countries from putting their products on the markets of rich countries and from having access to better technology, not only productive but also information technology.

As a result of the widening gap with regard to access to technology, our countries have fallen behind in their efforts to advance and to ensure the well-being of their people. Moreover, it has served to perpetuate the differences in living conditions between developed countries and those that are still struggling to emerge from underdevelopment.

The situation is similar with regard to the obstacles that impede access to basic medicines to improve public health in areas as sensitive as AIDS and malaria. Those obstacles take the form of patents that grant quasi-monopolistic powers to the pharmaceutical companies that produce those medicines.

In addition, the already devastating differences that exist between States are even greater than the statistics currently show, using simplistic and rigid criteria such as per capita income, which does not accurately reflect reality. Forty per cent of the Panamanian population lives below the poverty line, but we are nevertheless statistically designated as a medium- to high-income country and therefore our access to external aid is very limited. Figures provide only a lifeless snapshot of a country. Behind that, or perhaps in spite of that, there is a human reality: that of men, women and children who suffer from hunger and constraints. Those people are not even aware of the existence of the United Nations, but they are fully entitled to the benefits of modernity. Instead, their way of life is being relentlessly handed down from one generation to the next.

The international community has demonstrated great resolve in the fight against terrorism and insecurity and it is prepared to make even further sacrifices, if necessary. However, it is time to recognize that hunger and poverty also undermine the internal security of our countries and endanger democracy. It appears that the world only responds to headlines, but every day poor countries suffer from misfortunes and constraints that do not produce headlines for the tragic reason that the international community seems indifferent in some cases or has quite simply resigned itself to them.

There is no point in asking a developing country to rectify so many deficiencies within a reasonable time frame if it cannot even have access to funds on more favourable and predictable terms than those currently being offered by the international capital market.

Improving the quality of life of our citizens — a goal that the United Nations has set itself — depends on the increasing use of physical and financial capital, as well as the national labour force, in activities that generate growth and promote innovation. The material well-being of our societies will be achieved when more people work and each of those workers is more productive.

Our countries are not begging for favours. What we are demanding is a more level playing field. The markets of industrialized countries are blocked by protectionist tariffs and by non-tariff barriers, which impede access to them by the rest of the world. The most developed countries pursue agricultural policies that seriously exacerbate poverty in developing countries. For one thing, their domestic production receives billions of dollars in subsidies. The surplus thus created is then dumped on world markets at prices that significantly reduce the income of the traditional exporting countries.

Therefore Panama welcomes the commitment of the United States of America, announced last week from this very rostrum by its President, to eliminate all subsidies that — as he himself recognized — have created poverty in many countries. If all those countries that subsidize their products to the detriment of free trade were to adopt here a similar commitment and to implement it swiftly, then the United Nations would have solid grounds to celebrate its sixtieth anniversary as an historic and highly significant occasion.

For its part, Panama reiterates today that the canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans will remain open and secure, demonstrating the high degree of efficiency to which the international community is accustomed. We have analysed the needs of international trade and, aware of Panama's role in the era of globalization, we shall take a definitive decision on the canal's extension through a national referendum.

Our countries should not be condemned to stagger from one crisis to the next. By emphasizing the need to combat the alarming levels of poverty and abject poverty, humankind's collective conscience will emerge in favour of development and progress. This Organization was created at the end of the cruelest war of all times in order to protect humankind from the horrors of a similar conflict and to ensure that peace and harmony would prevail throughout the world.

Panama welcomes the progress that has been made towards that goal and rejects any attempt to delay the application of peaceful solutions to regions that continue to suffer a high level of political tension that seriously endangers peace. That is our vision of the inequalities of a society founded on the principles of the twentieth century, and an expression of cautious optimism about the opportunities to blaze a new trail for the benefit of our people, who want to leave their fears behind and to attain the dreams that all are entitled to simply by virtue of being alive.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United

Nations His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kufuor: After the celebratory and powerful statements made here by leaders from all four corners of the world during these past few days commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of this Organization, all that is left for Ghana to do is to emphasize a few points in this annual general debate of the General Assembly.

The record attendance of heads of State and Government at this year's meetings is evidence that, more and more, nations of the world are accepting and looking up to the United Nations to provide the moral and practical framework and leadership for the shaping and governance of the onrushing global village. Without doubt, the Organization has become both the main centre for the mobilization and deployment of resources for the relief of victims of natural and man-made disasters alike, and also the chief agency and catalyst for the spread of opportunities for progress and development for all humankind. Reassuringly, it is galvanizing the conscience of humankind to resist and desist from inhuman conduct, whilst putting in place a global social safety net for the poor, the weak and the handicapped in a world of strident competition.

Ghana will therefore continue to contribute to the ongoing debate on United Nations reform, especially the strengthening of the Organization's institutions at all levels. The reforms must radiate the spirit of common humanity in which each person is his brother's keeper. That will engender the trust needed to anchor the tolerance and goodwill which must be the cornerstone of the globalization process.

The increasing realization of our common humanity will lessen the divisive tendencies of racial, religious, political, gender, cultural and other social categorizations. Already, the world, under the leadership of this Organization, is doing well in its many dramatic rallies in rushing aid to victims wherever disaster occurs, such as the Indian Ocean States after the tsunami and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, here in the United States of America.

In spite of those positive developments, however, the persistent and worsening carnage and mayhem caused by terrorism still seem to lurk everywhere. Nowhere and nobody seems to be safe any longer. Whatever its cause, terrorism cannot be justified or rationalized in terms of a solution, since its effects do not discriminate between the perceived guilty and the innocent. That is why the world must stand together and try to eradicate it.

African nations are now showing a strong determination to end the conflicts that have bedevilled the continent for decades. The setting-up of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peace and Security Council under the auspices of the African Union is a demonstration of that resolve. Through NEPAD, Africa has identified the factors of good governance, the culture of democracy, the rule of law, free and fair elections, sound economic management of States, and State support for and partnership with the private sector as critical for sustained socio-economic development, peace and stability.

For accelerated economic growth, Africa is generally agreed that the way forward is through partnerships among the African nations and with the rest of the world to create economies of scale and to attract both domestic and foreign direct investment. That will create opportunities for employment, the transfer of know-how and markets to combat the debilitating poverty. The world community must support Africa in those ground-breaking efforts.

Africa believes that the realization of the agenda under the Doha Round could also bring significant benefits to developing countries. But alongside those efforts must come support for the call for greatly enhanced economic aid from the United Nations and the developed world for the struggling third world to nurture itself into the fitness required for the competitiveness that the global market demands. The same rationale must back the various initiatives aimed at providing assistance for the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases. It is only by containing those diseases that the continent's development can be kept on course.

The empowerment of women and children is moving apace on the continent. In that regard, Ghana has established a Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs to spearhead policies and programmes to promote gender equality and enhance the status of women.

This is a historic moment of truth for the international community. The destiny of the United

Nations and humankind is in our hands. We have the choice to save it, and the time to act is now.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Kurmanbek Bakiev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Kurmanbek Bakiev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Kurmanbek Bakiev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bakiev (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the important post of President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth anniversary session and to wish you every success in your responsible and difficult task. May I also extend our thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for his successful presidency of the previous session of the Assembly.

The summit that ended yesterday demonstrated that the United Nations remains the universal Organization capable of making an important contribution to strengthening international peace and security, achieving sustainable development and finding adequate answers to new global challenges and threats. In that regard, I hope that this sixtieth anniversary session of the General Assembly will become a major event in and give people some hope for the future.

The rapid changes in today's world have not bypassed Kyrgyzstan. Our people, not indifferent to its own destiny and future, in March of this year chose its own path to development, progress and creativity. Another page has been turned in Kyrgyzstan's modern history. We enter the twenty-first century full of resolve to achieve our deepest aspirations and hopes for peace, prosperity, progress and freedom. We are confident that that the goals reflected in the Millennium Declaration will be achieved in the Kyrgyz Republic as elsewhere.

If it is to preserve the respect and to justify the hopes of peoples, the United Nations must not lag behind the swift and ever accelerating changes taking place in the world today. It must not only adapt to current realities, but also create more effective machinery for addressing new challenges and risks.

Kyrgyzstan is convinced that United Nations reform should fully reflect the will, fundamental rights and interests of all States Members and peoples.

In recent years, the Security Council has been repeatedly criticized for its failures in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is therefore extremely important that the Security Council find the most effective way to meet its basic responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Kyrgyzstan has consistently advocated expansion of the membership of the Security Council and reform of its working methods in order to make it more representative, democratic and, above all, more effective. We believe that the reform of the Security Council should be based on the principles of universality, efficiency and broad geographic representation. The Council's decisions must be as timely as possible and their implementation correspondingly expeditious and effective.

The Kyrgyz Republic shares the position that United Nations reform will be successful only if Security Council reform is followed by reform of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, We support efforts to enhance the activities of the General Assembly and to strengthen the coordinating functions of the Economic and Social Council. Effective coordination among the three principal organs is extremely important in addressing the complex problems facing the world today.

We all realize how great and complex are the challenges facing the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and security. Kyrgyzstan intends to make its contribution to those tasks. For the first time, it has offered its own candidature for non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the term 2012-2013. We understand the great responsibility that membership of that crucial organ of the United Nations entails. I would venture to assure the

Assembly that Kyrgyzstan will make every effort to increase its cooperation with Member States in all regions and to become a reliable partner in resolving global political issues.

Today, the United Nations and its agencies are more engaged with issues of development than with those of security. While many United Nations agencies deal every day with the problems of development, there is only one permanent organ that deals with security issues. In our opinion, given globalization and the interrelationship of all issues relating to man-made and natural disasters, along with international terrorism and extremism, the United Nations capacity to maintain global security must be considerably strengthened. We believe that development programmes should be endowed with preventive powers to ensure security and safety.

The history of international relations in the second half of the last century shows that it is virtually impossible to preserve international peace and security when certain basic conditions of life remain unmet. Poverty and deprivation lead to tension, which in turns leads to breaches of international peace and security. It is no accident that it is precisely the poorest regions of the world that suffer the most serious regional conflicts. If it is to achieve its security and development targets, the international community must adopt a more balanced policy.

The world community must work actively to overcome disparities and inequalities between the countries of the North and the South. We feel that the United Nations needs to establish interactive machinery to resolve the issues that cause the poorest countries to opt out of the process of global development and decision-making. The countries of the South should become full partners in decisions involving global problems.

Kyrgyzstan remains committed to the Monterey Consensus, whereby the developed countries will increase their development assistance and poor countries will adapt themselves to using that assistance more effectively. At various high-level forums, we have come to understood the concepts of sustainable economic development and sustainable human development. We fully support those concepts, with substantive provisions reflected in our national strategy and programmes.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of the national development programmes of many countries is directly linked to regional and international cooperation. It is at the juncture where all of those interests meet that the United Nations and its agencies must further enhance their role and coordinate their efforts.

We support the proposal for national development strategies to be adopted by 2006 and implemented by 2015 as indicators for the implementation of the development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. In our opinion, the United Nations should mobilize new resources, strengthen coordination and increase its contribution to the resolution of development issues.

Donor countries must now move from paying lip-service to their obligations to concrete action. In that regard, the Kyrgyz Republic welcomes the decision of the European Union to allocate 0.7 per cent of its gross national income to official development assistance by 2009. Kyrgyzstan also advocates the identification of an acceptable level of indebtedness and the adoption of urgent and commensurate measures to ease the debt burden of developing countries.

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked, mountainous country. Mountain States are characterized by remoteness, difficult accessibility, the scarcity of information, harsh geo-climatic conditions, and high costs of living. While receiving financial aid from the developed countries, Kyrgyzstan itself is a donor of environmental services whose value increases yearly. So, for example, the Kyrgyz Republic is one of the principal repositories of glaciers and suppliers of fresh water in the region. Moreover, in the context of the International Convention on Biological Diversity, Kyrgyzstan also operates a network of biosphere areas and releases much less greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than most other countries of the world, thus contributing to the preservation of the planet's ozone layer.

At the same time, unfortunately, in our territory, our many stockpiles of radioactive waste are an inheritance from the military-industrial complex of the former Soviet period. Their maintenance and the prevention of further potential ecological accidents for the entire Central-Asian region are an excessive burden for Kyrgyzstan. We believe that the international community, with a coordinating role for the United Nations, should more actively involve itself in those

areas of environmental risk and provide more financial and technical assistance to avert global and regional ecological disasters.

We also believe that the United Nations should be more active in assisting poor and developing countries regarding sustainable development by creating machinery to shift the burden of external debt to sustainable development. A significant amount of our income goes to servicing our debt, hindering the socio-economic development of mountainous areas.

In addition to disaster preparedness and mitigation, Kyrgyzstan supports initiatives on the creation of a worldwide early warning system for natural disasters. As a mountain country, Kyrgyzstan regularly faces serious and frequent natural disasters, such as earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, and the flooding of cities and settlements. In our harsh experience, the consequences of such natural disasters divert huge sums from economic and social development and highlight the importance of strengthening ecological security. As a first step, Kyrgyzstan offers the use of its territory as a pilot area for the prevention and mitigation of such natural disasters.

I would also like to express our support for the establishment of a committee of regional organizations under United Nations auspices. Such a committee would enable the exploitation of untapped potential of the regional and subregional organizations in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and other important regional problems. Regional structures with such potential that are now operating effectively should play a mutually complementary role in facing new threats and challenges. Kyrgyzstan supports the participation in the work of the committee of such organizations as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Euro-Asian Economic Union and the Central Asian Cooperation Organization.

We also support measures to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and welcome the Secretary-General's proposal on United Nations standby forces of peacekeepers and civilian police.

The Kyrgyz Republic is the only country in Central Asia that participates in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We have sent military observers and staff officers to the United Nations missions in Liberia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Serbia and Montenegro, and the Sudan. We are proud of our contribution and are resolved to continue supporting that noble endeavour.

Kyrgyzstan actively supports the efforts of the international community to restore and strengthen peace in Afghanistan and has opened its territory to the forces of the counter-terrorism coalition and the Collective Security Treaty Organization to provide regional security measures.

We remain committed to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The text of the agreement on such a zone has been agreed by five countries of our region and we are pleased that the Kyrgyz Republic is to be the depositary of the treaty. We feel that this is evidence of the great respect and trust in which our Republic is held with regard to the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone. I am firmly convinced that the establishment of such a zone in our region will strengthen global security and regional stability. We hope to obtain the corresponding support of the world community.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the world community is going through a difficult phase in the establishment of a new system of international relations. Clearly, it will be a long, drawn-out process. The States Members of the United Nations should affirm their readiness to find practical solutions to the most essential problems of our time: combating poverty, famine and disease and to work for sustainable development. This session of the General Assembly will be remembered as the session of reforms.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kurmanbek Bakiev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Uribe Vélez (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate you, Sir, on your election and wish you every possible success in the ongoing reform process.

The celebration of the sixtieth anniversary is an ideal moment to reiterate my country's commitment to the goals and principles of the United Nations. We express our support for the task of reforming the Organization.

Colombia's adherence to multilateralism is based on its active participation throughout the United Nations process, from the signing of the Charter in San Francisco on the June 26 1945 to today, with many of its agencies present in my country supporting our national policies to solve the problems we face.

It is a source of pride that many Colombians have left their mark on the Organization. It is worth mentioning, among others, former President Alberto Lleras Camargo, one of the first and most fierce and efficient defenders of the principle of legal equality between States. He was also a champion of common defence, which compels democratic States to come to one another's defence should one of them be the victim of aggression.

Colombia had the privilege of presiding, through Eduardo Zuleta, over the opening of the first session of the General Assembly. His vision of the Organization is as valid today as it was 60 years ago, as you, Sir, recently acknowledged in your speech to the Assembly.

The diversity and evolution of thought are human gifts. To exercise those faculties, it is necessary for States to guarantee democratic opportunities that allow each individual to contribute to and compete in the quest for the collective good. There can be no room for any form of ideological stasis, which would discourage emulation, fail to recognize intelligence, and paralyse creativity in the search for solutions to people's problems.

Recognizing diversity and the evolution of thought is the source of our vocation for pluralism. It guides the struggle against terrorism that we have carried out with democratic conviction for three long years. Now that dictatorships are expressions of the past and democracy is an indestructible paradigm, it is time to review certain concepts that are becoming obsolete and must be replaced with more useful and contemporary ones.

The mindset that characterizes Governments as being of the left or of the right is a simplistic view that produces a polarized political atmosphere. It has triggered irreconcilable emotions and sensitivities that are inconsistent with the actions of our Governments and threaten the unity of our countries.

I dare suggest that, in their place, we use five parameters to qualify our democracies. They are security with a democratic scope; the effective protection of public freedoms; transparency as a factor of confidence; social cohesion as a principle of democratic sustainability; and the independence of institutions. With these parameters, we can define a democracy as institutional or only skin-deep; as governed by judicial order or by personal whim; as progressive or backward, inclusive or exclusive.

Colombia is working on a concept of democratic security, enshrined in global security. We call it democratic because it differs from the doctrine of national security that was applied in the continent and used to suppress freedoms, punish democracy, stigmatize the opposition and frustrate dissent. Our security is aimed at deepening democracy. We have gone to great lengths to ensure that this process of re-establishing security is recognized as a democratic value by all schools of thought. We are determined that security shall be provided on equal terms, efficiently and transparently, to those closest to the Government, as well as to its most hardened opponents.

In Colombia, the security problem has been the product of the weakness of the State in facing criminals. We wish to reconfigure the equation and to finally have a State that is strong enough to guarantee Colombians the effectiveness of their freedoms and protect them from all threats. Given a democracy that is deep-rooted and without ambiguities, no violent action can enjoy a veneer of legitimacy; on the contrary, it must be disqualified and branded as terrorist. We therefore express our solidarity with those who have suffered from the actions of terror.

For three consecutive years, the number of homicides, kidnappings and other terrorist crimes has fallen in Colombia. We have not yet won the struggle against terrorism, but we are winning it. That victory

will bring peace and progress to our country and, with illicit drugs uprooted from our soil, the world will feel great relief. To that end, we need the participation and support of the international community.

The opposition in Colombia has always had safeguards, but today those guarantees are truly effective thanks to democratic security. Colombia has always embraced the cause of human rights, but those are now enjoying more tangible respect thanks to democratic security.

While strengthening citizen's confidence in their institutions, the concept of security that we profess and practice requires those who opt for violence to cease hostilities and prepare to negotiate a lasting peace. The decisive and firm action to thwart those who practice terror, along with a generous policy for those who choose to abandon armed intimidation, have allowed the demobilization and reintegration of 20,000 out of some 50,000 terrorists. The Government's door remains open to negotiation so long as the agreement on cessation of hostilities remains accepted.

We need the world to support our plans for reintegration. I ask members to imagine the magnitude of the challenge. We have 20,000 former combatants — a number that could double in coming years — individuals who have hitherto lived by the gun and are accustomed to killing. What better contribution could there be to peace than the definitive rejection of illegality? To that end, we need the world's help in providing new opportunities for rehabilitation and social integration.

We are implementing a law on justice and peace, which is applicable to all terrorist groups. By comparison with earlier Colombian laws and those of other countries, our law raises the bar in terms of justice and reparations for victims.

We have increased fumigation to rid our country of the illicit drugs that finance terrorism, and we are optimistic with regard to manual eradication. By the end of 2005, some 30,000 hectares of illegal crops should be destroyed. We require greater support from the international community in order to provide our peasants with alternative opportunities.

Democratic security has allowed investors to regain their confidence, and we have begun to see early signs of declining unemployment. In that way, we will find the resources to face yet another challenge — that of overcoming poverty and building a nation based on total social cohesion. Our social policy is framed by a long-term vision and short-term goals under constant review, in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals, the fulfilment of which we reaffirmed yesterday in this Hall.

I wish to cite three of the seven chapters of our social policy. The educational revolution is an axis of social cohesion and the road towards equality, the redistribution of income, and the opening of new channels for social mobility, without which democracy will remain incomplete.

Promoting a country of owners emphasizes the financing of medium, small and micro enterprises in order to overcome the barrier of access to credit, a hateful form of discrimination that hinders democracy.

Comprehensive social protection, which in three years' time will provide health insurance to all people living in poverty, has allowed us to register progress in the provision of child nutrition, to ensure access to education and to improve the well-being of the elderly.

This year, 500,000 families will be involved in Colombia's programme — poor families that receive a State subsidy to feed and educate their children. In the near future, that number will rise to 1 million, in addition to the increase budgetary efforts undertaken under the aegis of the educational revolution. In 2006, 10 million children will benefit from our nutrition programmes, and 570,000 elderly citizens will receive stipends to cover their most pressing needs.

Our social policy also comprises ongoing efforts to strengthen alternative development programmes in order to allow us definitively to overcome the problem of illicit drugs. Through such programmes, the international community has a unique opportunity to contribute to and implement the principle of shared responsibility.

The "forest-keeper families" programme, involving some 33,000 families committed to maintaining their areas free from drugs and to supervising the recovery of the tropical forest, as well as a programme to provide care to the displaced and reintegrated, will cost Colombia some $300 million dollars next year.

We stand firm in the fight against terrorism and in our conviction that a sustained and permanent victory depends upon the success of each individual country in

the struggle for social cohesion. In projecting our security policy as a mainstay of the State, we believe it to be intrinsically linked to the ongoing improvement of the social conditions of our people. The distinction between authority and social policy is erroneous. Peace stems from authority, but lasting peace will require us to weave a social fabric of equity.

Let this be an opportunity to draw attention to the threat of rising oil prices and the lack of energy alternatives for poor countries that are net importers. There are already signs of disturbance that could lead to grave disruptions of institutional stability. Ignoring that problem could raise greater obstacles in our fight against poverty and prevent us from achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Many countries, including brotherly countries in Central America and the Caribbean, require immediate action to help finance the supply of fuel and the development of new fuel sources.

I would like to reiterate the gratitude of the Colombian people for the effective presence and solidarity of the United Nations in our country.

We hope that the debate on the issue of reform will further strengthen multilateralism. We also hope that the Organization will emerge strengthened from that debate, in order that it may effectively promote institutional democracy governed by progressive and inclusive legal processes in every country comprising the community of nations.

Led by the United Nations, contemporary diplomacy must become more austere in its spending and rely more upon the Internet and modern communications than on travel, in order to avoid becoming a heavy and debilitating burden upon countries and to ensure that the resources saved on organizations, expenditures and contractors can truly reach communities in need. I wish to reiterate that the issue of austerity vis-à-vis world diplomacy is absent in our approach to United Nations reform, and we should include it.

Every country, as well as the United Nations, as our universal Organization, can contribute to making these hopes a reality and to bringing peace, security and comprehensive development to our peoples, thereby reaching the goals we set for ourselves for the early years of this century.

Our warm regards go out to the people of the United States, which has been battered by Hurricane Katrina. We wish to express our resolute solidarity with those who have been its victims. It is our hope that, in a few days, relief and rescue experts from Colombia will be on the ground in affected communities in the United States.

We are all committed to one task, namely, meeting the social goals of the millennium.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Most Honourable Percival James Patterson, MP, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Jamaica

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Jamaica.

The Most Honourable Percival James Patterson, MP, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Most Honourable Percival James Patterson, MP, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Jamaica, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Patterson (Jamaica): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly. May I also express our deep appreciation to Mr. Jean Ping for so ably guiding the work of the General Assembly during its fifty-ninth session.

I am honoured to address the General Assembly today in my capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77 and China. Five years ago, I was among the leaders of nations, rich and poor, who met here under the auspices of the United Nations and made a compact to rid the world of the most dehumanizing conditions afflicting a

large portion of humankind. That was a solemn pledge made by us to the most disadvantaged peoples of our world — the poor, the hungry, the illiterate, the homeless, the sick — to infants, mothers and the unborn, as well as to nature, which must sustain the existence of the whole human race.

This year's *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reveals that one fifth of humanity survives on less than $1 per day, and that 2.5 billion people fail to earn $2 daily. The recently concluded High-level Plenary Meeting has revealed that we have made slight progress, more so in a few regions, to meet some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But we are nowhere on track to achieving the promises of any of the major development-oriented United Nations conferences or summits held since the adoption of the MDGs. Progress has been uneven. At the current pace, some regions and countries will miss several of the MDGs by decades. In certain areas, such as the elimination of hunger, we could be centuries away.

We are likely to miss global targets in the areas of infant and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases and environmental sustainability. Limited financial resources, debt, restricted asymmetrical trade opportunities and HIV/AIDS have been identified as major inhibiting factors. Beyond those constraints, during the past five years many developing countries have suffered devastating natural disasters, which have disrupted economic growth, damaged production, destroyed infrastructure and dislocated populations, causing economic losses that amount to years of gross domestic product (GDP). Development goals and targets cannot be met within the time frames without a massive addition of resources, both financial and technical. No one can remain safe and secure, or even content, while living in an oasis of wealth surrounded by a desert of poverty.

Not to be forgotten is the unfulfilled agenda of gender equity. The empowerment of women must be a vital ingredient in all our social and economic programmes.

We agreed at Monterrey on a comprehensive approach to mobilize the financing needed for real global development that specified the contributions required from developing and developed countries alike. Our review has revealed that, as a group, developing countries have delivered on their commitments. Most have achieved a level of economic growth and have increased domestic resources and foreign-exchange reserves. There has been a strengthened focus on South/South cooperation, which has seen trade among developing countries growing faster than their total export trade and an increasing flow of investment.

At the second South-South Summit, held in Qatar in June, we agreed on a major programme of South/South cooperation that is already having results. I shall cite just two examples. First, the Governments of Qatar, China and India pledged donations at the Summit to launch a South fund for development and humanitarian assistance. Secondly, last week at Montego Bay, Jamaica, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela signed, with several Caribbean Governments, the Petrocaribe Energy Cooperation Agreement to enhance energy security, facilitate socio-economic development and advance regional economic integration in the Caribbean. This is a most positive initiative at a time of high and volatile energy prices and insecure supplies.

From our partners in the developed world there has been a gradual recovery of private foreign direct investment and in the provision of official development assistance (ODA). We welcome the increase in debt relief, including debt cancellation, for many of the most highly indebted poor countries, as well as the renewed focus on Africa and on HIV/AIDS.

However, the review has also revealed some trends that are cause for anxiety, and therefore worthy of our attention. First, a significant part of the resources mobilized by developing countries has been used to finance debt-servicing payments to multilateral development banks and to increase foreign-exchange reserves held in developed countries. That has led to net transfers to developed countries every year since 1998. Secondly, foreign direct investment has been concentrated in, and is becoming almost confined to, the larger, faster-growing developing countries. Thirdly, the increase in ODA since 2000 has largely been the result of resources targeted for emergency assistance, debt relief and technical assistance. Together they accounted for 50 cents of every aid dollar in 2004. Fourthly, debt relief has been limited to those highly indebted poor countries which have satisfied International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions for disbursements. Fifthly, the terms of trade continue

to work against commodity- and preference-dependent developing countries. And sixthly, the sudden erosion of trade preferences has created significant economic hardships for many developing countries without the resources or time to diversify their export base. The net result is that there have been insufficient new resources available to the vast majority of developing countries to invest in meeting long-term development goals.

Policy space for developing countries to act effectively and the timing and quality of the resource flows are also very important. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China calls for the elimination of aid conditionalities which restrict the policy options for developing countries and thereby the real effectiveness of development cooperation.

Further, we stress the need to cease the use of unilateral coercive measures against developing countries. It is wrong to apply the weight of economic power to pressure developing countries for political purposes. This causes severe hardships and jeopardizes development efforts, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

There are developing countries which face peculiar, if not unique, development challenges. The Group of 77 and China has consistently argued that Africa, the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States face special and tremendous challenges. These are magnified in a globalized, liberalized and competitive international economic environment and with the increasing incidence of more devastating natural disasters.

The arguments are gaining acceptance. There are now internationally agreed programmes for the last three named groups and an emerging consensus for a special programme for Africa under African leadership. The special programmes for these groups of countries were reaffirmed at our High-level Plenary Meeting. We now need to implement them with urgency.

We have long recognized that export trade is the most sustainable source of resources for development as well as the best stimulant to investment and employment. The current international trading rules and systems are heavily stacked against developing countries. We must resolve to transform international trade into an engine of growth. The policies, rules and modalities of global trade must have development focus. Why have we failed so miserably to fulfil the Doha mandate for a development round? We sent only the feeblest of messages from the High-level Plenary Meeting to our trade ministers, but unless they are given firm instructions to afford special and differential treatment to developing countries, the December Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Hong Kong will, like those held in Seattle and Cancun, yield a dismal collapse.

We agreed in Monterrey that it was necessary to reform the international economic system and make it more coherent and supportive of the development policies of Member States. We also agreed that it was necessary to increase the voice and participation of developing countries in the international financial and trade institutions. Yet nothing has happened. We cannot allow the Bretton Woods institutions to remain forever impervious to our calls. To attain the agreed development objectives, there must be a renunciation of the ill-conceived policies imposed on a number of developing countries under structural adjustment programmes begun three decades ago.

We might dispute the causes and the sharing of responsibility, but no longer do we dispute the awesome reality of climate change. The evidence that climate change poses a long-term challenge to every part of the globe is irrefutable.

Developing countries have maintained that climate change and other unsustainable pressures on our environment demand urgent attention. Developed countries must take the lead in changing production and consumption patterns: in an approach to the development and transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries on a preferential basis; in their level of commitment and support to fight against desertification and land degradation; and in the resources to be devoted to the management of waste and in the change towards the promotion of a culture of recycling. We must keep on pressing for the development and adoption of strategies that mitigate, and build resilience to, the impact of climate change.

I have spoken thus far on development issues. But these are closely related to other critical areas of the international agenda. One such area is disarmament and arms control, which is in danger of becoming a neglected and forgotten goal of the United Nations. The link between disarmament and development is even more relevant today. The figures are indeed

startling. Roughly $1 trillion is now spent annually on weapons and military equipment of all kinds, consuming a massive share of the world's resources. If such resources were channelled into development, the world would not only be more prosperous, it would be much safer and more secure.

Our concern is not just about nuclear weapons. It is also about the proliferation of guns of every description, which endangers the lives of ordinary citizens, undermines the rule of law and threatens social stability. Those who manufacture such weapons must exercise greater control and support anti-proliferation efforts.

The United Nations was established 60 years ago to bring peace and security to the world, and also to play a major role in promoting development. The United Nations must not allow, as has appeared to be the case in recent years, any part of its mandate to be usurped.

The Bretton Woods institutions and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, now the World Trade Organization, have taken dominant positions on policies in areas of their specialization. These policies, however, have far-ranging implications across the economic, social and environmental spectrum. There is a glaring gap in overall international development policymaking, and in the capacity to secure coherence across the development, finance, trade and technology areas.

With renewed priority to development and the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations reform should empower the Organization by providing the resources and a clear mandate to do at least three things. First, it should ensure system-wide coherence, including with the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, in respect to the policies and operational activities which impact the achievement of the agreed development goals. Secondly, it should bring the resources of the development-oriented arms of the United Nations system to focus on development priorities that have been identified by Member States. And, thirdly, it should promote dialogue and partnership, review trends, particularly in resource mobilization, and implement measures to ensure that the Development Goals can be met within the agreed time frames. These should be the responsibility of a revitalized Economic and Social Council.

The future of generations to come rests not so much on the vigour of our debate and the declarations at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, but on the action we take, commencing right here in New York, to make the United Nations stronger and more effective.

All our citizens are demanding that collectively we emerge with a clear vision, that we display the courage and unrelenting commitment to build a world of peace, justice and equity, which we can inhabit together in true harmony. They are convinced that it is within our power to rid the only planet where human life prevails of hunger, ignorance, disease and strife. They believe we can provide shelter to the homeless and eradicate poverty everywhere; that once we have the political will and determination, we can prevent genocide and combat terrorism; that irrespective of gender, race, colour or religious creed, we can ensure for every person the inalienable right of human dignity.

Let us spare no effort to build a single world free from want and fear, free from exploitation and oppression: a mother Earth where justice, liberty, prosperity and the wisdom of creative minds prevail in abundance. Let us here resolve to build one world in which every man, woman and child can realize the true purpose of life and enjoy its fulfilment. Let us determine that the time for action is now and sound the trumpet of hope for all mankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Jamaica for the statement he has just made.

The Most Honourable Percival James Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Right Honourable Jack Straw, MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Straw (United Kingdom): Let me begin, Sir, by paying tribute to your predecessor, Jean Ping, for his extraordinary work — above all on the world summit, but also throughout his year as President — and by offering my congratulations to you on beginning your year in office.

I should also like to express, on behalf of the European Union and all its member States, our deepest sympathy and solidarity to the people of the United

States, particularly those in the Gulf states, in their hour of need.

In early July, my first duty in the presidency of the European Union was to go to Srebrenica to mark the tenth anniversary of the massacre there, the worst in Europe since the end of the Second World War. More than 8,000 people, mainly Muslim, were taken away and killed as the international community just stood to one side. To be sure, we had shown the right convictions in words, but shamefully, we had failed to act. The lesson of that massacre — and of the even greater horror of Rwanda a year before — was that we all needed better means to turn our collective will into decisive action. I think that we in the European Union have learned in the intervening period. Today, the Union is on the ground as a military, police or civilian presence in Bosnia, in Aceh, in Iraq, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, with the African Union, in Darfur.

I also think that the United Nations has learned the lessons of the past decade. At the summit this week, we agreed on the further steps that we need to take for the Organization to be even more effective. Of all that was agreed at the summit, I believe it will be the agreement on our "responsibility to protect" that will be seen in the future as having the greatest significance of all. If we follow through on the responsibility to protect, then never again will genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity be allowed to take place under our noses with nothing done.

The responsibility to protect is, of course, a reflection of our common morality. But it is also a recognition that the world in which we now live is too small for us to be unaffected by, or indifferent to, the innocent victims of murder and oppression. This shrinking of the world has been as sudden as it has been profound. When the Berlin wall fell, a generation of ideological certainties was swept away. People could suddenly see partners where before they had only glimpsed adversaries. And as that very visible barrier was noisily being breached, a revolution in information technology was quietly erasing the barriers of distance and time. Continents and cultures are now cabled together and bound by trade and services in a way that was unimaginable even a decade ago.

In this new world, we can no longer safely tolerate the general threat that can come from a particular human tragedy, wherever it takes place. To a greater extent than ever before, we share the same world: the same threats and responsibilities, the same opportunities and interests. And precisely because the boundaries of our world have contracted, the horizons — the ambitions — of many people around the globe have infinitely expanded. For the first time in our history, mankind has the ability to realize the potential of individuals in societies of all kinds and in every region through an open exchange of goods, investment, technology and, above all, ideas.

Not least in all of this, it is the rise of India and of China that is reordering the world economy. Hundreds of millions there and elsewhere have been lifted out of poverty. A new global market has been created that ignores the divide — which seemed so fundamental for so many decades — between East and West.

Currently, not everyone has the chance to share in all of that. Much of sub-Saharan Africa remains blighted by poverty, disease and conflict. The European Union has now set a clear timetable to achieve the 0.7 per cent target for aid. Debt relief, trade reform and development aid are all vital, but none of them can work alone. Fundamental to making poverty history are the Governments of the developing world themselves. And where Governments fail, their own peoples are the victims, as United Nations Special Envoy Anna Tibaijuka's damning assessment of the situation in Zimbabwe only too graphically shows.

Sub-Saharan Africa is not alone in having yet to achieve its potential. The American author Thomas Friedman, in his recent book *The World Is Flat*, highlights an extraordinary anomaly: it was the Arab peoples whose forebears devised algebra and the algorithms upon which our entire digital age is based, but those peoples are now right at the rear of today's technological revolution, with, for example, fewer than 2 per cent of those populations having Internet access. Three United Nations Development Programme Arab Human Development Reports have now set out clearly how limited economic prospects and stunted political freedoms have led young and talented people towards alienation and disillusionment.

The answer, however, does not lie in easy stereotypes about some clash of civilizations. It is only the terrorists and the preachers of hate who want us to believe that Islam and the West are fundamentally

different. Theirs is a philosophy of mistrust and despair, and we reject it utterly. Indonesia and Turkey — to name just two — are both striking examples of how countries with predominantly Muslim populations can embrace democracy and modernity. We in the European Union have seen the vibrant Muslim communities in our own countries, and from that experience have seen how Islamic and Western cultures can be partners in a global society.

Everyone knows that the Arab peoples want prosperity, freedom and democracy every bit as much as anyone in Europe or America. So the fact that the Arab world has the lowest scores in regional measurements of democratic practices, civil freedoms and good governance is not some cultural inevitability, but a temporary failure of human will. In that regard, the international community has a clear responsibility to encourage regionally led political, social and economic reform. The European Union strongly supports such reform and will continue to do so. Equally, it has been our active foreign policy that has placed us in the lead with regard to Iran, especially on the nuclear dossier.

With our High Representative Javier Solana and my French and German Foreign Minister colleagues, we have made detailed proposals for the relationship between the European Union and Iran to be based on cooperation and respect for international norms and treaties.

Our proposals envisage a high-level, long-term political and security framework between the European Union and Iran, in which we would work together in political, economic, scientific and technological areas, including the civil nuclear field, in return for Iran providing guarantees about its intentions and capabilities concerning nuclear weapons. So, we will listen very carefully to and reflect on this afternoon's speech by the new President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

On Iraq, the European Union now has a comprehensive programme of engagement and has put behind it divisions over the military action two and a half years ago. We are supporting the goal of a peaceful, prosperous, democratic and stable nation.

We are also giving very active support to the Quartet's efforts to secure a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, with two States living side by side. We salute Prime Minister Sharon's brave decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, and we salute President Mahmoud Abbas's work to build the first stage of an effective, viable State of Palestine.

In July, the European Union again suffered the horror of a major terrorist atrocity. This time the target was my country, the United Kingdom: its capital, London. But none of us is safe from the threat of terror. International terrorism requires an international response; otherwise, we all pay the price for each other's vulnerabilities. The ratification of a comprehensive treaty on terrorism is, therefore, at the highest priority.

But the threat from terrorists and the political instability they bring is made worse by the easy availability of weapons in what has become an anarchic, unregulated international trade. These same weapons fuelled the killings in Rwanda and in Bosnia a decade ago and are fuelling the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Darfur today. We already have international instruments to regulate chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. We in the European Union have a comprehensive arms control regime. But I suggest to the General Assembly that the time has now come for this Organization to embrace the idea of an international arms trade treaty, which would build on and strengthen existing initiatives.

It was in the killing fields of Europe, in two successive wars, that the twin ideas of the United Nations and of the European Union became imperative. Today, the European Union's commitment to the United Nations is profound; it has never been stronger. And it is reflected in what we give in voluntary donations and to the regular budget and peacekeeping operations.

The fundamental purpose of the United Nations remains today what it was at its foundation: to remove the scourge of war, to reaffirm the worth of the human person and to promote social progress and better standards of life. In this changed and changing world, it is the responsibility of us all to ensure that this Organization has the powers and the resources to achieve all these aims.

The President: I want to express my appreciation for the respect demonstrated for the time limit on statements.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.